

ORANGE COUNTY CALIFORNIA  
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

## **THE SPURGEON STORY:**

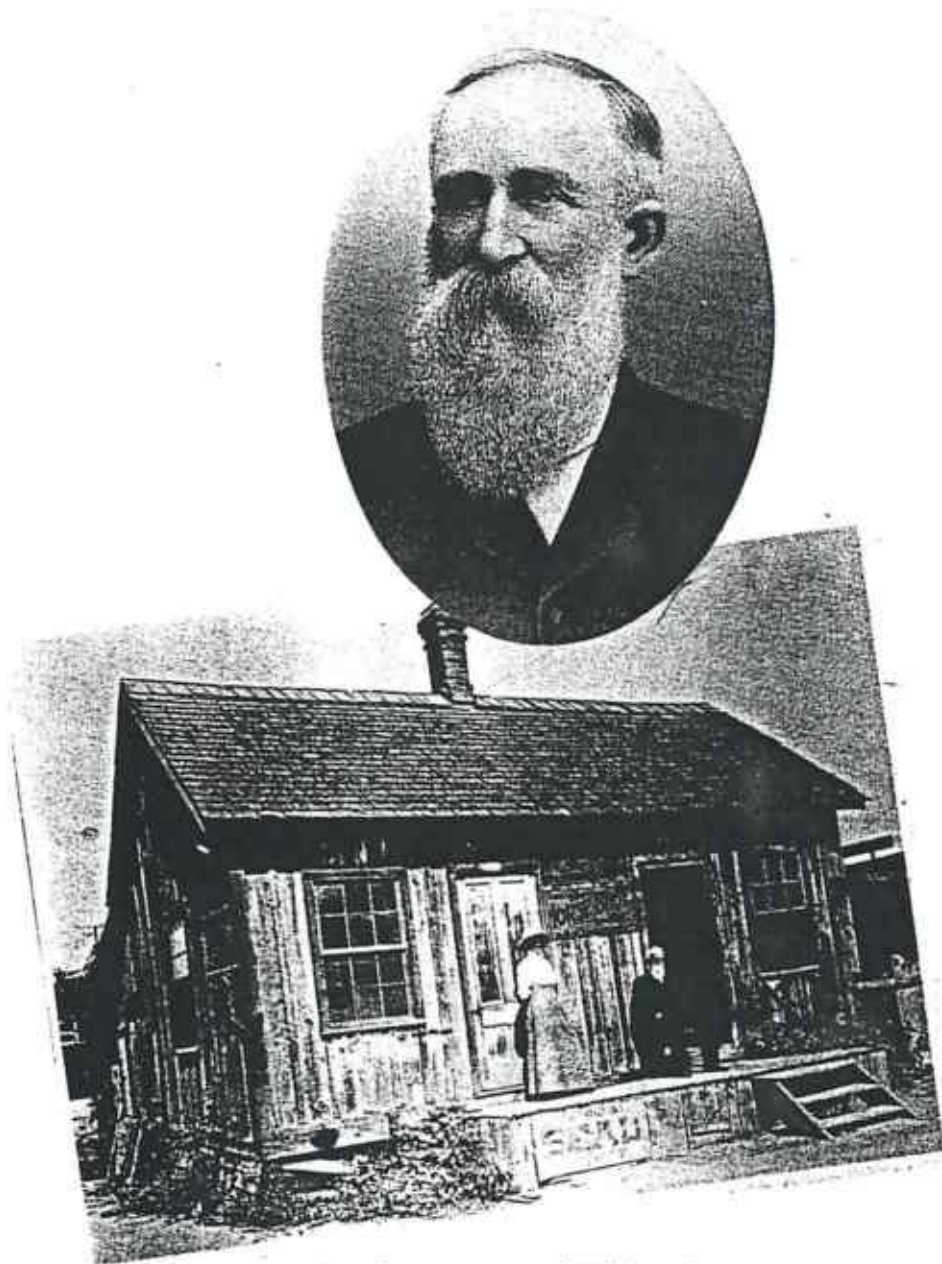
**From Newgate Prison  
to  
Santa Ana, California**

**A True Story of  
Deprivation, Hard Work, and Spectacular Accomplishments.**

Narrative and Accumulated Data  
by  
Wanda Smith Ballard

2000

**OCCGS REFERENCE ONLY**



*Somber portrait of William Spurgeon,  
the "father of Santa Ana," top;  
Spurgeon posing with his wife, above.*

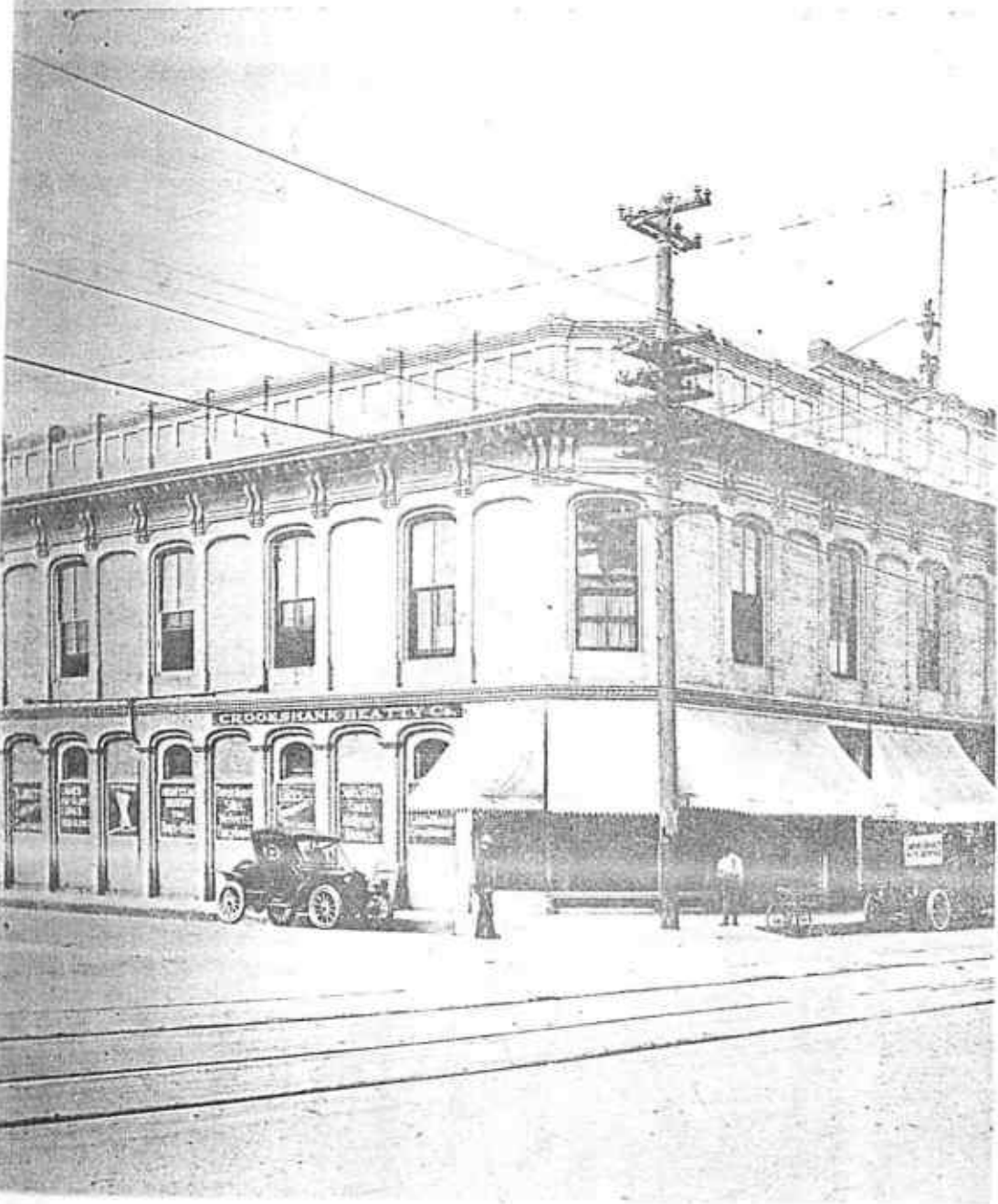
PHOTOGRAPHS: JIM SLEEPER COLLECTION,  
FIRST AMERICAN TITLE INSURANCE CO.



*SPURGEON (WILLIAM HENRY THE III) ... served in the South Pacific as a lieutenant ...  
(courtesy of Mrs. William Henry Spurgeon the III)*



*On October 5, 1910, MR. SPURGEON (W. H. SPURGEON, JR.)  
married MISS BEE DEE ABBOTT  
(courtesy of Bee Dee Abbott Spurgeon collection)*

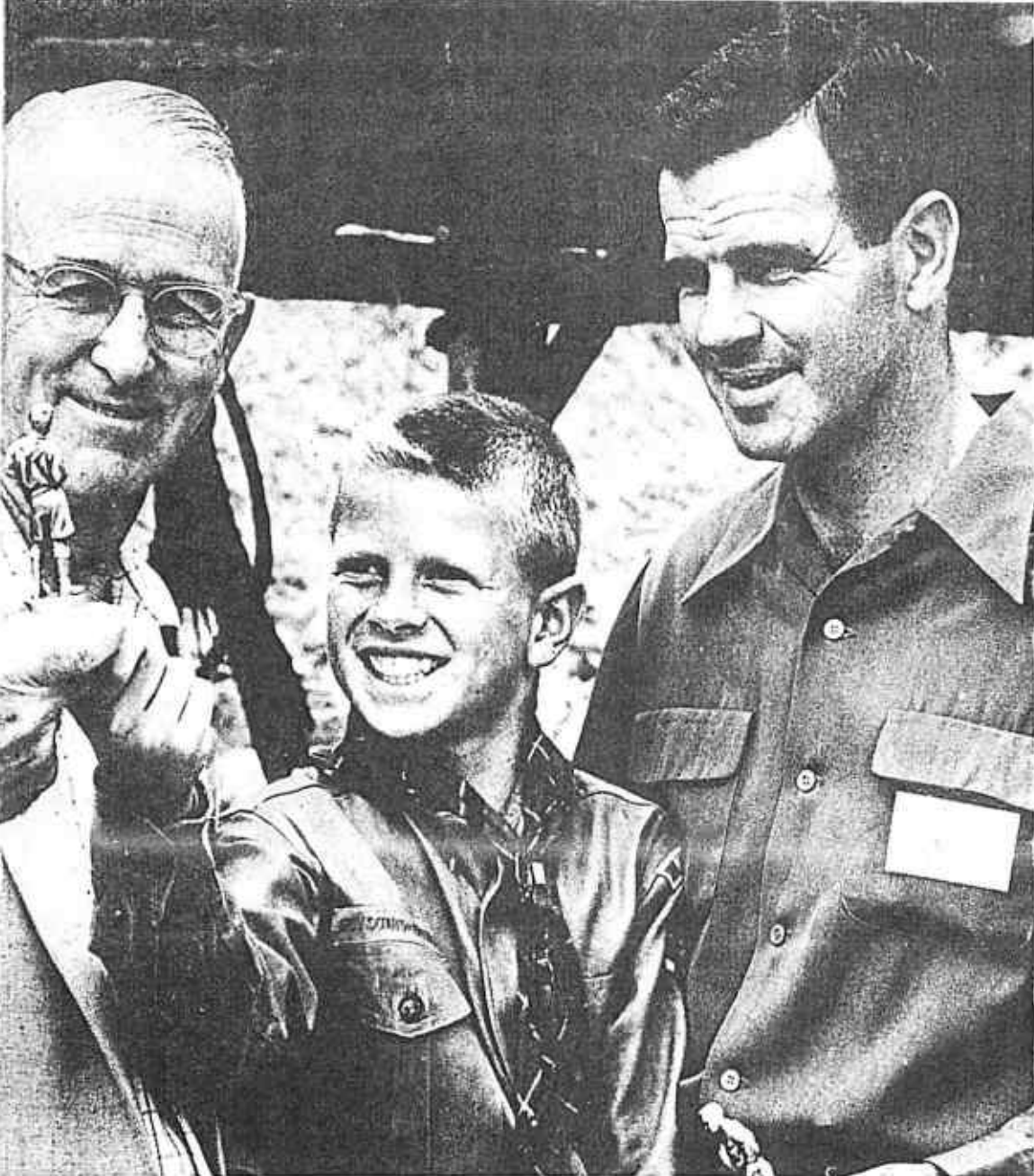


*The first SPURGEON BUILDING was erected in 1882.  
(courtesy of Bee Dee Abbott Spurgeon collection)*





W. H. SPURGEON FOUNDER OF THE CITY



... From left to right: WILLIAM HENRY SPURGEON, Jr., with his grandson (WILLIAM HENRY SPURGEON the IV) and his son WILLIAM HENRY SPURGEON the III.  
(courtesy Bee Dee Abbott Spurgeon collection)



**1898:** Santa Ana founder William Henry Spurgeon, top left, shown here on Newport Beach. Among those pictured is William H. Spurgeon II, back row right.

# 1869 | Santa Ana founder Spurgeon instrumental in O.C.'s creation

He was already well-traveled by the time he reached the mustard fields of central Orange County in 1869. William Henry Spurgeon was born in Kentucky, but his family had moved several times before settling in Missouri. He set off for the gold fields of California, where he was one of the few to do well.

Spurgeon served in the Rogue River Indian War, ran a mercantile business back in Missouri, crossed the Plains west again, returned again to Missouri, then crossed the Plains yet again — all at a time when any journey to California was a treacherous and exhausting venture.

His wanderlust apparently satisfied, Spurgeon began looking for a place to set down some roots. Thus was born the city of Santa Ana. He settled on a mustard patch that once was part of a Spanish rancho. He bought a tad more than 74 acres from Jacob Ross for \$594.

Spurgeon evidently saw something that others couldn't. Santa Ana was in the middle of nowhere, seven miles from Anaheim and 20 miles from San Juan Capistrano. To entice new settlers, he offered land at \$15 per lot, and soon was giving away two for the price of one.

He ran the first postmaster service, keeping mail in a partitioned wooden shoebox. He paid for hacking a three-mile path through the ubiquitous mustard

grass so Wells Fargo stagecoaches would stop there. He drilled an artesian well, which poured into the water tower that was Santa Ana's first supply. Spurgeon even extended the ditch from the Santa Ana River for the new farmers in the area.

One legacy of Spurgeon's industriousness is the Spurgeon Building, the four-story brick structure with a Swiss clock tower looming over the corner of Fourth and Sycamore streets.

Spurgeon had enough political savvy to understand how things got done in 1870s California. His town's salvation lay in securing a railroad station, and if that meant raising \$40,000 from his small community of several hundred residents to pay the ravenous Southern Pacific Railroad, that's what he'd do.

When the city incorporated in 1886, Spurgeon was the obvious choice as mayor. But when the city's fickle voters failed to re-elect him two years later, he didn't waste time sulking, but instead poured himself into the campaign to

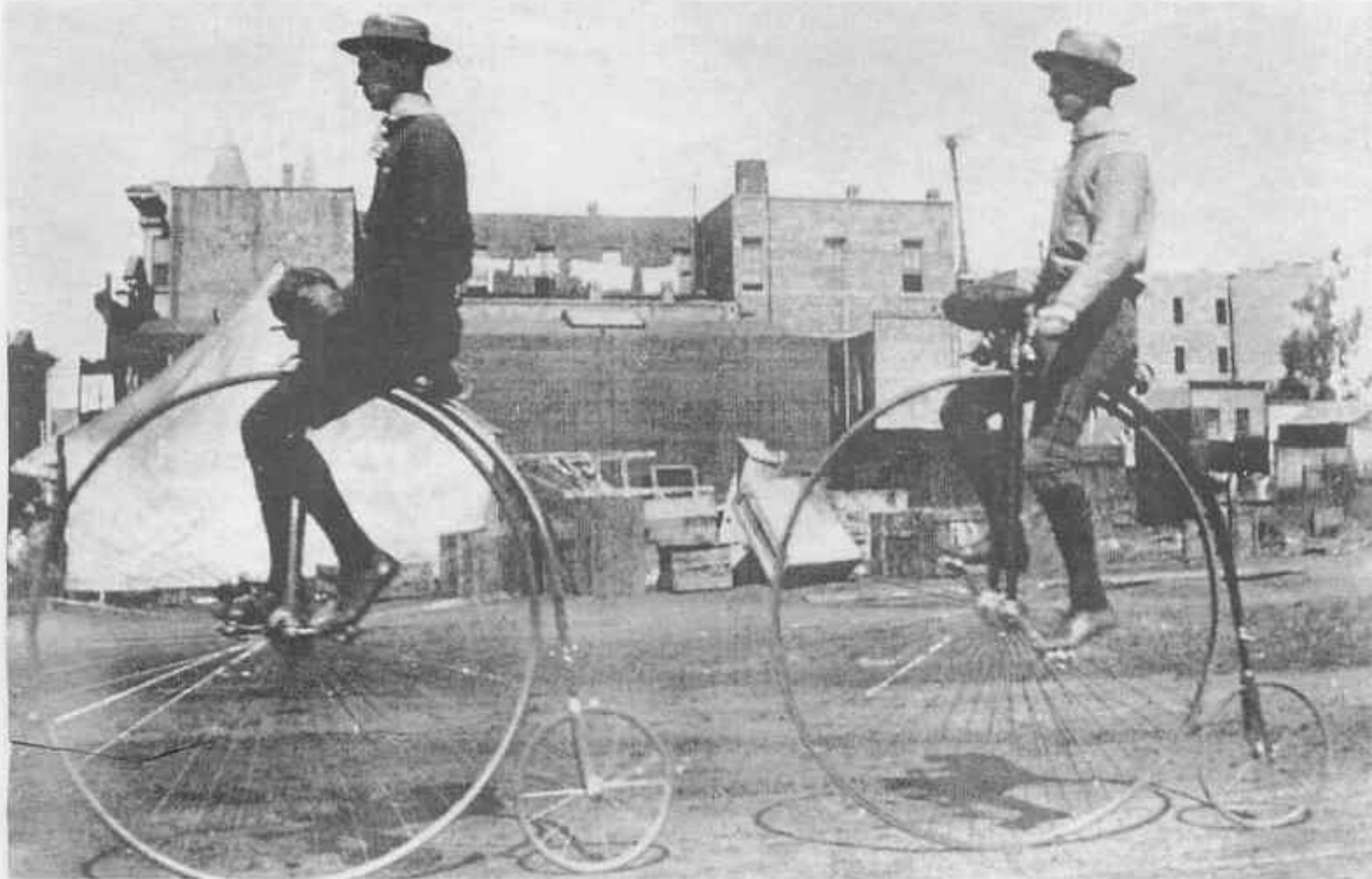


**THREE GENERATIONS:** From left, William Henry Spurgeon II, IV and III.

separate Orange County from Los Angeles. The attempt succeeded when six previous efforts failed, and Orange County split from Los Angeles in 1889. Santa Ana took the role of county seat and Spurgeon was picked to lead the first county Board of Supervisors.

There was one reward Spurgeon declined, and that was changing the name of the town to Spurgeon, as some Santa Anans sought. William Spurgeon died in 1915 at age 88.





**UBIQUITOUS NAME:** James Harvey Irvine, left, son of Irvine Ranch founder James Irvine, turned the family's business into the Irvine Co., which became a powerful force in agriculture and, later, real estate development.

# 1864 | Irvine family's legacy lives on in many forms

If you live in central Orange County, you're in Irvine country.

After all, James Irvine and his descendants once owned a quarter of Orange County, a swath of land extending from the foothills of Orange to Laguna Beach, more than 120,000 acres that first became an agricultural powerhouse and then remade itself into an urban Eden envied and copied around the nation.

The Irvines have had a major effect on every era of Orange County history since 1864, when the first James Irvine joined Thomas and Llewellyn Bixby and Benjamin Flint in a buying spree that put most of three Mexican ranchos in their pockets.

James Irvine was a silent partner, the man with the money to complete the deal. Less than two decades before, the Scottish-descended Irvine left famine-ravaged Ireland for America nearly penniless. He headed for California to make his fortune — not from the gold rush, but as the owner of a grocery store.

The partnership he joined in Orange County tried to make wool a substitute for cotton during the Civil War. But after years of drought and other problems, the effort was headed south. The other partners lost interest, and Irvine bought them out in 1876. To end his dependence on wool, Irvine began diversifying, planting wheat and barley.

His son, James Harvey Irvine Jr., truly transformed the ranch. He waited six

years to inherit the ranch after his father's death from Bright's disease in 1886. He dropped the "junior" and set out to make a name for himself.

With help from friends at Standard Oil, he drilled 14 deep-water wells, with pumps powered by gasoline. In 1910, he laid 50,000 feet of concrete pipeline to irrigate his farmland, on which he then grew lima beans, Valencia oranges, lemons, walnuts, olives and sugar beets. His ranch overtook Ventura County as the "lima bean capital of the world" and became the most productive ranch in California.

In 1937, he created the James Irvine Foundation, setting up a charitable organization with a controlling interest in his stock upon his death. He wanted to make sure his agricultural empire wouldn't be broken up.

Irvine died in 1947, reluctant to change his farming ways even as the rest of the county was bracing for an urban future. His surviving son, Myford Irvine, was ill-prepared to lead the ranch — that man-

tle was supposed to fall upon James Irvine III, who died years before of tuberculosis. Myford built several coastal communities, including Irvine Terrace, Cameo Shores and Irvine Cove. His death in 1959 was another in a series of tragedies that hounded the family, including the premature death of two siblings. Myford's demise was ruled a suicide, but many suspected murder.

He was the last family member to run the ranch, but hardly the last Irvine to have an effect. Joan, the daughter of James Irvine III, served on the Irvine Co.'s board of directors when members were against giving the University of California 1,000 acres for a campus. She lobbied the board relentlessly until it awarded the land in 1960.

The Irvine Co. saw the breakup of James Irvine's agricultural empire as inevitable and hired famed architect William Pereira to make an orderly plan for development. The result was the city of Irvine, which became the fastest-growing city in the United States in the 1970s, a master-planned community that set the pattern for the county's growth.

The Irvine family's legacy continues in its gifts to Orange County: Irvine Regional Park, the Irvine Bowl for the Pageant of the Masters, Crystal Cove State Park, other parks and many schools.